Course Title - Ethics and Culture

Course Objectives

- The course aims to help students explore ethical and cultural dimensions of their lives.
- The course provides a forum for students to pause, revisit their assumptions and beliefs, and become mindful of their thoughts, emotions and actions.
- It gives the students an opportunity to express themselves and inquire into their decision making processes. This will enable them to cultivate ethical values and participate in the creation of a society based on acceptance, compassion, and justice.

Learning Outcomes

- Explore perspectives on ethics in thoughts, words and actions
- Evolve ethical decision making practises
- Understand the need for an ethical society and culture
- Introspect, become conscious of and assess one's stance in life
- Cultivate empathy, tolerance and compassion
- Apply the values learnt in the course to everyday life.

Syllabus of *Ethics and Culture*

Unit 1

Unit I: Introduction | The Basis of Ethics
• Getting to Know Each Other • What to Expect from the Course? • Recognition of Our Common Humanity • Empathy, Compassion and Justice
Unit II: The Role of Intelligence, Reason and Emotions
• Discernment: What Is The Right Thing To Do? • The Art of Conflict Resolution • Destructive and Constructive Emotions • The Need for Emotional Balance
Unit III: Cultivating Inner Values | Ethics in the World of Work and Play
• Training the Mind: Mindfulness and Kindness • Meditation • Discovering your Vocation and Interests • Self-discipline, Integrity, Commitment, Creativity • Work-Life Balance
Unit IV: Striving for a Better World | Outreach Activities
• Means and Ends • Debate and Dialogue • Culture as Shared Values • Creating and Sustaining Ethical Cultures: The Role of Philosophy, Religion, Literature, Theatre, Cinema, Music, Media

Practical/ Practice Component
Unit 1

1. The teacher may ask students to introduce themselves, sharing their regional and cultural roots. They may be asked to reflect on those aspects of their identities that reflect their cultural roots.
2. After a round of initial introduction, the teacher may ask students to list down a set of values that they think they have developed through their parents and grandparents. Are these values unique to their families, regional and/or ethnic backgrounds? Of these, which are the values they would like to sustain and which are the ones they would wish to modify?
3. The teacher may draw upon the values discussed by students in the previous lesson. Using these as the base, the teacher may ask students to think of ethical values that form the basis of their decisions.

4. The teacher may ask students to think of people who they think have lived an 'ethical life'. These may be people who they know from their personal lives or people known for upholding ethical values in the face of adversity.
5. Students are encouraged to identify what are common human values necessary to realise shared common humanity–the feeling of interconnectedness/interdependence.
6. Class to be divided in small groups to discuss how each would make an effort to cultivate new morals/ethical values for betterment of their local environment.
7. Celebrating 'Sharing and Caring' based on regional diversity can be encouraged.
8. Engage students to do activities of 'being in the shoes of others' (peers, parents, siblings, house help/support or in any local community grappling with problems) to understand the problems empathetically.
9. The students can be asked to make bookmarks/cards to remind them about virtues pertaining to empathy versus sympathy, need versus greed, just versus unjust or compassion versus insensitivity.
10. Compassion is about cultivation of it as a daily value so students can in small groups undertake compassion based activities of looking after animals, birds, needy, elderly, differently abled, non-privileged etc. and share their thoughts in the class.

Unit 2

1. Make the student think of a hard decision they have made. What made it hard? How did you make the decision? How do you assess it retrospectively?
2. Encourage students to think of judgements and decisions based on the dilemmas and challenges they faced? How do they go about making these decisions?
3. The teacher may introduce any well known story and ask the students to discuss the story from the point of view of the different characters.
4. Ask students how willing they are to deal with a conflict when it occurs. What strategies do they adopt to resolve the conflict?
5. The teacher may ask students to prepare posters with captions like "avoidance", "competition", "cooperation" and "adaptation" and then may ask students to identify with one of these styles which according to them best represents their style of dealing with conflict.
6. The students may be asked to discuss different such similar situations that they may have encountered and a discussion may be initiated on how they resolve those conflicts.
7. The students can be asked to write down certain destructive emotions that they are experiencing presently. How would they work to make them constructive? A classroom discussion could follow around this.
8. Ask the students to note down a list of constructive emotions experienced by them

recently. Were the constructive emotions less powerful as compared to the destructive ones experienced by them? Discussion in class can follow.

9. How do you (i) express, (ii) handle anger/ disgust/ distress/ fear (any destructive emotion can be taken up). A healthy discussion in the class can take place around this.
10. Students may be asked to practice a simple breathing exercise. They can sit straight with eyes opened or closed in a comfortable position to just observe their breathing. They can repeat this exercise six to eight times and share (if they like) their experience of silence.
11. To identify your interests and develop a meaningful hobby.
12. Have an open conversation in the class about happiness.

Unit 3

1. The students could observe various emotions that bottle-up in their minds and be asked to watch the flow of emotions non-judgmentally.
2. Students may be asked to recall their journey to the college that morning. Do they remember road signs, faces of people they crossed, the roads that they took, the people they interacted with, the sights and smells around them, or anything else?
3. Students could be asked to cultivate the habit of simple greeting as practice of gratitude and celebrate a day of joyful giving.
4. The students can close their eyes for 2-3 minutes and be asked to observe their thoughts, list them and categorise them into 'to be kept' or 'to let go'.
5. The teacher may ask students to close their eyes and imagine a situation in which they are truly happy. Students could wish for the well-being of two students in the same classroom in their meditative state.
6. Students could meditate on who has been their inspiration and the qualities of the person who has inspired them and then express gratitude to the person concerned.
7. The teacher may ask the students to think retrospectively about what they thought they would take up as a vocation when they were younger. How and why their choices were influenced and changed, if at all.
8. The teacher may ask the students to imagine and chart a journey and destination for themselves. They may also talk about the challenges they foresee.
9. The teacher may encourage the students to maintain a daily diary of their scheduling of time or a worklog and see how much time they effectively give to their work. The teacher may help the students identify the distractors and where one may be 'wasting' time and energy. The activity is designed to help students understand the value of effective time utilisation.
10. In this lesson, the teacher may ask the students to draw up a list of team ethics. They may build this based on their experiences of working with each other in groups.

11. The teacher may ask the students to share an incident each where they felt pressurised/bored to complete some work. How did they deal with their stress and monotony of work?

Unit 4

1. Students will be asked to work in pairs and develop situations that pose ethical dilemmas and how to resolve them.
2. Students may be asked to look at a film or at an advertisement and discuss what they think about the question/s posed in them. The teacher may ask them if they can think of an alternative ethical approach to the problem posed.
3. Students will be asked to think of situations in which they lost their temper. Have they ever felt that in a fit of emotion they said something that they regretted later? If they had paused to listen and then respond, what would the other person have said? How would the outcome of the situation have been different?
4. A debate on any relevant topic may be conducted in the class. After the first round the students may be asked to adopt and argue their opponents point of view. At the end of this exercise the students can have an open discussion on which position finally appealed to them.
5. The teacher may give a short story to the students and ask them to change the ending. They may be asked to observe how characters and their views may have undergone change in the process.
6. There can be a discussion around a topic such as, the idea of corporal punishment, euthanasia etc. Students can be given a sheet of paper and can be asked to write for or against the theme. The idea is to enable them to understand that the positions they have taken vis-a-vis the theme are a result of different value orientations.
7. Popular foods from many parts of India can be discussed. Their origins can be traced to chart a kind of food history.
8. The teacher on the basis of discussions with students can draw from Philosophy, Religion, Literature, Theatre, Cinema, and Media to highlight that the choices people/characters make are grounded in their culture.
9. The students can discuss classical/folkdances that are performed in their respective groups. Details can be drawn based on the number of dancers, music (live or recorded) and costumes. The role of oral traditions and literature in indicating the importance of ethics in our everyday lives can be discussed.

Suggested Activities for Outreach: Social/ Community Engagement and Service

In the weeks that follow, students will be expected to engage in outreach activities that shall enable them to put into practice some of the ethical considerations deliberated upon and imbibed in the previous modules. A list of suggested outreach activities is as follows:

- Adopt a village with the aim of cultural and ethical learning
- Discussing health and hygiene issues in a community
- Tutoring students Gender sensitization
- Working on environmental issues
- Working with Child Care Centre such as Anganwadis and Balwadis
- Working with differently abled students
- Preserving cultural and heritage sites
- Spending time with senior citizen including a Senior Citizens Home
- Extending care to animals in animal welfare shelters
- Addressing issues relating to Reproductive Health
- Spreading awareness about adolescent health
- Addressing issues relating to mental health
- Health and nutrition awareness
- Swacchata Abhiyaan
- Sensitisation towards disease awareness
- Vriksharopan

If required, students can share their experiences in the form of a Project Report

Any other Practical/Practice as decided from time to time

Suggested Readings:

- Aristotle. *Nichomachean Ethics*. London: Penguin Classics, 2004
- Swami Vivekananda. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Advaita Ashrama, 2016.
  ---https://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/vivekananda/complete_works.html
- Panch Parmeshwar in English translation as The Holy Panchayat by Munshi Premchand
- The Silas Marner by George Eliot
- We are Seven by Wordsworth
- The Chimney Sweeper by William Blake

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